

BOROUGH OF SALTASH

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# Annual Report

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH  
1949

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P. J. FOX, M.B., B.Ch., B.A.O., D.P.H.

SALTASH  
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*With the  
Sanitary Inspector's  
Compliments*

*Church House,  
Saltash.*



## BOROUGH OF SALTASH

# Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the year 1949.

Your Worship, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to present my Annual Report for the year 1949. Although the birth-rate was lower, the death-rate higher and infectious disease was more prevalent than in 1948, there was nevertheless no marked or special deterioration in the health of the population of the Borough during 1949. It is almost inevitable that the birth-rate should fall from the higher figure which prevailed during, and for some time after the war. The raised death-rate is I believe an indication of the larger number of older people who on retirement tend to come to Cornwall to settle. The increased incidence of infectious disease was wholly due to an epidemic of measles which prevailed in Cornwall during the early months of 1949. There was in fact a reduction in the number of serious infectious diseases as compared with 1948. There were no maternal deaths, and the infant mortality rate showed a substantial reduction on the 1948 figure.

One of the main, if not the main, foundations of good health is adequate housing—and by adequate I do not mean the bare essentials necessary to shelter from wind, and weather. An adequate house is one which not only gives physical protection against the elements, but in which also the individual, and the family can find contentment and happiness. In our modern world inadequate housing is perhaps the most potent single cause of human unhappiness and frustration, which in their turn are basic fundamental causes of vague, and often chronic ill health. Bearing in mind the high cost of building, and the restrictions, and controls in force, the completion of a further twenty-one houses during 1949 represents a very reasonable achievement when it is remembered that the Ministry of Health had imposed a year's cessation of new buildings in 1947-8.

During the year the problem of caring for aged and infirm persons was encountered more than once. Many such old persons live alone, and through physical, and mental infirmity, either of themselves, or coupled with chronic illness, their living conditions deteriorate, and become progressively more insanitary. Most of these old persons do not take kindly to the notion of going to an institution where they can be cared for, and in many cases refuse to leave their homes. An added complication is the fact that many old persons suffer from minor chronic illness and/or physical defects which necessitate admission to a hospital for chronic sick. Where this is the case the problem is even more difficult since there is a considerable waiting list at the only hospital in this Area which deals with chronic sick. Much thought is being given to the care and welfare of old people, but no rapid or easy solution of this problem can be expected, and progress in this matter is bound to be slow. Whilst dealing with this subject I can report that it was not necessary in any case for the Council to apply to the Magistrates for an order under Section 47, National Assistance Act, 1948, for the removal of aged, or infirm persons to an institution or hospital.

The total number of cases of tuberculosis notified during 1949 was 8, a reduction of 2 on the figure for 1948. Tuberculosis differs mainly from other infectious disease in being a chronic disease. In this respect it can and does incapacitate sufferers for months, and indeed years, rendering them a burden to themselves, and the national economy, and a potential source of danger to those with whom they live. Moreover tuberculosis is a killing disease which during 1949 caused 3 deaths in the Borough and somewhere in the region of 19,000 deaths in England and Wales. It is a preventable disease but, unfortunately, methods of prevention are physically difficult and financially expensive to put into operation. As far as the Borough is concerned the provision of adequate housing is one of the most important contributions that can be made towards the solution of this problem.

Poliomyelitis—or to give its popular though incorrect name of infantile paralysis—has during the past three years been causing concern throughout the country. This disease, which is notorious for the severe, permanent paralysis it may cause is one of many due to viruses, which are germs too small to be seen by normal laboratory methods. Intensive research has been, and still is in progress to discover more about the disease, and more especially about its methods of spread, but at present we do not know nearly enough about it, and specific preventive measures are therefore difficult to apply. During 1949 there were outbreaks of moderate intensity in West Cornwall, and indeed as far east as Fowey, but in South-East Cornwall we mercifully escaped, only two cases having been notified. No case occurred in the Borough.

In this introduction I have dealt with those aspects of Public Health which will I believe be of interest to you. Some matters not touched upon in the preceding paragraphs will be dealt with in the body of my report. It remains for me to thank all those members, and officials of the Council who have co-operated with me in the preservation and furtherance of the public health, and to express the hope that the happy relations which have existed throughout 1949 will be maintained in the future.

I have the honour to be,

Your Worship, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

P. J. FOX,  
Medical Officer of Health.

**Borough of Saltash.**

Area of Borough	...	...	...	6,257 acres.
Population (Registrar-General's Estimate)	...	...	...	7,430
Number of Inhabited Houses	...	...	...	2,200
Rateable Value of Borough	...	...	...	£51,877
Sum Represented by Penny Rate	...	...	...	£208 15 10.72

**VITAL STATISTICS FOR 1949.**

**Live Births.**

			Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	...	...	54	49	103
Illegitimate	...	...	4	3	7
			58	52	110

	Saltash M.B.	Health Area No. 7	England & Wales
Birth Rate per 1,000 of Population	14.80	15.65	16.70

**Still Births.**

			Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	...	...	3	2	5
Illegitimate	...	...	—	—	—
			3	2	5

	Saltash M.B.	Health Area No. 7	England & Wales
Still birth rate per 1,000 of Population	0.67	0.43	0.39

**Deaths.**

		Male	Female	Total
		54	69	123
	Saltash M.B.	Health Area No. 7		England & Wales
Death rate per 1,000 of Population	16.6	14.3		11.7

**Deaths Attributed to Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Puerperal State.**

No deaths were registered under this head.

**Death of Infants under one year of age.**

				Male	Female	Total
All causes	...	...	...	4	—	4
			Saltash M.B.	Health Area No. 7		England & Wales
Infant Mortality Rate per 1,000 Live Births			36.4		25.9	32.0

**Deaths from Enteritis, and Diarrhœa under Two Years of Age.**

No deaths were registered under this head.

**Principal Causes of Deaths at All Ages.**

Heart Diseases	...	...	...	43
Intracranial Vascular Lesions ("Stroke")	...	...	...	21
Cancer (all sites)	...	...	...	20
Respiratory Diseases	...	...	...	13
Kidney Diseases	...	...	...	5
Digestive Diseases	...	...	...	3
Tuberculosis	...	...	...	3
Influenza	...	...	...	3
Diabetes	...	...	...	3
Infantile Diseases	...	...	...	3

**Average Age at Death.**

Males	Females
62.2	71.9

NOTE.—Reference is made in the foregoing statistics to Health Area No. 7. For the purpose of health administration the County is divided into seven Health Areas. Health Area No. 7 is composed of the County Districts of Liskeard Borough, Saltash Borough, Looe Urban District, Torpoint Urban District, Liskeard Rural District, and St. Germans Rural District. It has a total area of 164,000 acres and total population of 49,133.



### General Provision of Health Services for the Borough.

(a) **Hospital Services.** These services are provided in the Borough by St. Barnabas Hospital whilst the comprehensive facilities of the Plymouth Group of hospitals are readily available.

(b) **Laboratory Services.** Bacteriological work is undertaken by the Pathological Department, South Devon and East Cornwall Hospital, Greenbank, Plymouth, and by the Public Health Laboratory Service, Royal Cornwall Infirmary, Truro.

Chemical analyses are carried out by Dr. F. D. M. Hocking, Royal Cornwall Infirmary, Truro.

(c) **Services Provided by the Cornwall County Council under Part III of the National Health Service Act, 1946.**

(1) **Care of Mothers and Young Children.** Ante-Natal, and Post-Natal advice for mothers is provided by the family doctor, and district nurse midwives. When for reasons which make confinement at home undesirable, and arrangements are made for the woman to be confined at the Alexandra Maternity Home, Devonport, or at the City Hospital, Plymouth, she attends there for ante-natal supervision and advice.

Infant Welfare Clinics have been held at fortnightly intervals at the Guildhall. Miss S. L. Luxton, the County Council Health Visitor, assisted by voluntary helpers, organises and conducts this clinic. Dr McMillan, the Assistant School Medical Officer attends at every alternate session. The average attendance of infants and pre-school children during 1949 has been 31 per session, a reduction on the average for the last half of 1948, but nevertheless a very creditable figure.

(2) **Midwifery Service.** During the year Nurses Spreadborough, S.R.N., S.C.M., and Baker, S.E.A.N., S.C.M., provided domiciliary midwifery services, and in the course of which they attended 67 confinements, and carried out 1,160 visits in connection with this service.

(3) **Health Visiting Service.** This has been provided in the Borough by Miss S. L. Luxton, Q.N.S., H.V.

(4) **Home Nursing Service.** This has been provided by Nurses Spreadborough and Baker, who during the year carried out some 2,800 visits in connection with this service.

(5) **Ambulance Service.** The Ambulance previously owned by the Saltash Division, St. John Ambulance Brigade, was purchased by the County Council, becoming their property with effect from January 1st, 1949. Between the hours of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and up to 1 p.m. on Saturday it was manned by full-time driver-attendants of the County Ambulance Service. Outside those hours, and all day on Sundays, it was manned by voluntary effort with the kind, and willing co-operation of Superintendent Dwelly, and the members of the St. John Ambulance Brigade. The following are brief details of work undertaken by the Saltash Main Centre during 1949 :

Patients Carried.	Miles Travelled.
555	9,025.

(6) **Prevention of Illness, Care and After-Care.** Active preventative measures in the form of vaccination against smallpox, and immunisation against diphtheria have been available from the family doctor, and at the Infant Welfare Clinic. The demand for vaccination continues at a very low level, and there is a widespread apathy if not active opposition to this form of protection. Immunisation against diphtheria has been very much more freely availed of and with something like 80 per cent. of the child population below the age of 5 years immunised, it is not surprising to find that no cases of diphtheria occurred during the year.

Care and after-care arrangements were almost exclusively confined to the making of monetary grants to cases of tuberculosis to enable them to purchase extra items of food. The number in receipt of these grants during 1949 was nil.

(7) **Home Help Service.** This service which with the co-operation of the Borough Council and its officers started operating in November, 1948, continued throughout 1949. Mrs. Ward, of the Saltash W.V.S., acted as the very capable organiser of this service which during 1949 provided assistance in the home to 25 persons who through age, infirmity, illness or being maternity cases required such assistance.

### Prevalence of, and Control over Infectious Diseases.

Although the total incidence of infectious diseases showed an increase, 376 cases in 1949, as against 178 cases in 1948, the increase was wholly due to one of the less serious diseases, measles, which was epidemic in the early part of the year. The number of cases of pneumonia 21, was the same as in 1948. The incidence of whooping cough fell from 136 in 1948 to 41 in 1949, and the number of cases of scarlet fever, and erysipelas were reduced. No case of diphtheria or poliomyelitis was notified.

The following are details of cases notified and attack rates of the various infectious diseases during 1949:

Disease	Cases Notified	Attack Rates per 1,000 of population		
		Saltash M.B.	Health Area No. 7	England & Wales
Measles ... ..	303	40.79	25.85	8.95
Whooping Cough ... ..	41	5.52	3.76	2.39
Pneumonia ... ..	21	2.83	1.26	0.80
Food Poisoning ... ..	7	0.94	0.14	0.14
Erysipelas ... ..	3	0.40	0.24	0.19
Scarlet Fever ... ..	1	0.13	0.75	1.63
		376		

The seven cases of food poisoning were not severe in nature, and were due to eating processed meat which had been kept too long in extremely hot weather before being eaten.

## Tuberculosis.

During the year 8 notifications all in respect of pulmonary tuberculosis were received. This shows a slight reduction on the figures for 1948, when 9 pulmonary, and 1 non-pulmonary case were notified. There were 3 deaths from pulmonary tuberculosis in 1949, an increase over the figure of 1 death for 1948.

The following table shows details of new cases, and mortality from all forms of tuberculosis during 1949 :

Age Period	New Cases		Deaths	
	M.	F.	M.	F.
0—1	—	—	—	—
1—5	—	—	—	—
5—15	—	1	—	—
15—45	2	3	—	—
45—65	1	—	2	—
65 and upwards	—	1	—	1
Totals	3	5	2	1

At the end of 1949 there were 38 known cases of pulmonary tuberculosis, and 7 known cases of non-pulmonary tuberculosis resident in the Borough.

**National Assistance Act, 1948.** No action under Section 47 of this Act was called for during 1949.

**Water Supply.** Almost all the water used in the Borough was supplied by the Plymouth Corporation, and was of excellent quality, though the pressure was only just adequate to meet the demands. There is a need for piped water in the more rural parts of the Borough, but until the South-East Cornwall Water Board can supply larger quantities of water no further action can be taken in this direction.

**Drainage and Sewerage.** The present method of treating and disposing of sewage is not satisfactory, due to the overloading of the present disposal works. A scheme for improved disposal has been prepared by the Council's consulting engineers, and negotiations are in progress with the Ministry of Health, and local interests on the matter.

**Disposal of Household Refuse.** Household refuse is collected weekly in the populated part of the Borough, and fortnightly in outlying districts, and is disposed of by controlled tipping at Salt Mill.

**Food Poisoning.** A mild form of food poisoning involving 7 persons occurred in July, 1949. The suspected article of food was a pickled ox-tongue. This had been cooked soon after purchase and was then kept in an unrefrigerated household larder for at least two days during an exceptionally hot period. As a result of this it deteriorated, and was slightly "high" when eaten by some guests attending wedding festivities in a private house. Although the remaining portion of the tongue was sent to Plymouth for bacteriological tests no cause for the outbreak could be found. Other pickled ox-tongues purchased from the same supplier did not affect those who ate them.

**Housing.** Although the demand for housing in the Borough is far from being satisfied, good progress was made during the year in building, and allocating new houses. The Council is now engaged in developing housing estates at the Cowdray Estate, Liskeard Road, and Warraton.

**Factories Act, 1937.** With the exception of two concerns which employ about 100 persons each, there are only small installations coming within the scope of this Act in the Borough. No difficulties arose under this head during 1949.

**Clean Food Campaigns.** Although during routine inspections of shops, and cafes, every effort is made to ensure that food is handled and served hygienically, no organised campaigns have been arranged during the year.

**Sanitary Inspector's Report.** Unfortunately Mr. E. N. Smythe, who relinquished this appointment as Sanitary Inspector in May, 1950, did not complete his report before he left. However, his successor, Mr. R. B. Hall, C.R.S.I., with the assistance of records available in the office, has produced the excellent report which follows.

## ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SANITARY INSPECTOR FOR THE YEAR ENDING, 1949.

### Water Supply.

Water is taken from the Plymouth Corporation at the approximate rate of 268,000 gallons daily and from the South-East Cornwall Water Board at the rate of 4,000 to 5,000 gallons per day.

The quality of the water has been satisfactory and whilst the quantity has been adequate, the pressure has only been just sufficient for the present requirements.

As soon as the South-East Cornwall Water Board confirm their ability to supply the necessary additional water, the Surveyor will prepare a scheme for extending the mains to the Trematon and Trehan Area.

There is a piped supply and three (3) bacteriological examinations were made which were satisfactory. One (1) chemical analysis also proved satisfactory.

There has been no contamination of the water supply from any source.

The number of dwelling-houses supplied from public water mains are 2,050, and the number supplied by standpipes are approximately 150.

### Sewage Disposal and Sewerage.

Messrs. George Ivory and Partners, the Council's consulting Civil Engineers, have prepared a scheme for improved means of disposing of the sewage of the town, and are still negotiating with the Ministry of Health, the Admiralty, and other interested bodies. Meanwhile, the purification works at Salt Mill are, undoubtedly, overloaded and the effluent is therefore slightly substandard. This need not be regarded as a cause for alarm, as the effluent is discharged direct into the Tamar Estuary well below the Mean Sea Level, and compares very favourably with the crude sewage disposal discharged by this and other Local Authorities at other nearby points.



**Refuse Collection.**

The collection of refuse is the responsibility of the Council's Surveyor and is carried out by direct labour.

Collections are made weekly, except in outlying areas where it is fortnightly, and the refuse is tipped at Salt Mill Marsh. Controlled tipping is enforced and the tip is sealed by builder's refuse.

During the year the Council have purchased the tip at Salt Mill.

**Public Cleansing.**

Again the responsibility of the Council's Surveyor. St. Austell Rural District Council's exhaustor is hired as necessary for the cleansing of cesspools.

**Rivers and Streams.**

Periodical inspections are made in order to trace any pollution of the rivers and streams in the area and samples are taken if necessary.

**Closet Accommodation.**

Automatic flushing cisterns have been provided to many water closets which were previously flushed by buckets.

No known conversions to the water carriage system has been carried out.

**SANITARY INSPECTIONS OF THE AREA.**

Cowsheds, Farms, etc. (up to September 30th)	10
Shops ... ..	33
Food Premises ... ..	102
Infectious Disease Disinfections ... ..	8
Disinfestations ... ..	32
Ice-Cream Premises ... ..	12
W.C.'s., Drains and Testing, etc. ... ..	251
Keeping of Animals ... ..	8
Licensed Premises ... ..	12
Factories ... ..	34
Rodent Control ... ..	65
<b>Defects found and remedied after notices.</b>	
Formal Notice ... ..	32
Informal Notice ... ..	77

**Shops.**

Thirty-three (33) visits have been made during the year to shops and these were generally satisfactory. All ice-cream premises were registered in accordance with the Ice-Cream Heat Treatment Regulations 1947.

**Factories.**

Twenty-five (25) factories have received thirty-four (34) visits and in five cases notice has been served under the Act, the defects were remedied.

**Smoke Abatement.**

This is mainly a residential area and no nuisance from smoke has occurred.

**Camping Sites.**

One camping site is licensed by the Local Authority and this is inspected regularly.

**Sea Water Swimming Bath.**

The structure has fallen into disrepair and is no longer in use.

**Disinfestation.**

Thirty-two (32) premises have been disinfected, Zaldecyde and other trade preparations are used.

**Schools.**

Regular inspections are made and any complaint is forwarded to the County Educational Authorities. Facilities for school meals are also kept under observation.

**Licensed Premises.**

Twelve visits have been made to licensed premises and at two premises insufficient and defective sanitary accommodation was remedied.

**Rodent Control.**

Sixty-five (65) premises have been visited and revisited by our part-time Rodent Operator. In addition two sewer treatments have been carried out with satisfactory results.

**Housing.**

The Cowdray Estate, consisting of 24 U.T.2 type houses and 2 blocks of 4 flats, capable of converting to houses have been commenced. By the end of the year 6 were completed. 56 Council houses were authorised for 1949, of which 16 will be erected at Liskeard Road and 40 at Warraton. 15 Private enterprise licences were also authorised by the Ministry of Health and allocated by the Council.

**INSPECTION OF HOUSES DURING THE YEAR.**

(a) Total number of houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health and Housing Acts) ... ..	297
(b) Number of inspections made for that purpose ... ..	318
(c) Number included in sub-head (a) which were inspected and reported under the Housing Consolidated Regulations, 1925 ... ..	NIL
(d) Number of Inspections made for the purpose ... ..	NIL
(e) Number found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation ... ..	NIL
(f) Number (excluding those referred to in preceding paragraph) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation ... ..	NIL

REMEDY OF DEFECTS DURING YEAR WITHOUT FORMAL NOTICE.

Number of defective dwelling-houses rendered fit in consequence of informal notice by Local Authority or their Officers ... .. 77

ACTION UNDER STATUTORY POWERS DURING THE YEAR.

A. Proceedings under Sections 9, 10 and 16, of Housing Act, 1936 :

- (1) Number in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied ... 7
- (2) Numbered rendered fit after service of Formal Notice :
  - (a) By Owners ... 7
  - (b) By Local Authority in default NIL

B. Proceedings under Public Health Act :

- (1) Number in respect of which informal notices were served requiring defects to be remedied 109
- (2) Number in which defects were remedied after service of Formal Notice :
  - (a) By Owners ... 32
  - (b) By Local Authority in default NIL

C. Proceedings under Sections 11 and 13 of Housing Act, 1936 :

- (1) Number in respect of which demolition orders were made ... .. NIL
- (2) Numbers demolished in respect of demolition orders ... .. NIL

D. Proceedings under Section 12 of Housing Act, 1936 :

- (1) Number of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which closing orders were made ... .. NIL
- (2) Number of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which closing orders were determined the tenement or room having been rendered fit ... .. NIL

HOUSING ACT, 1936—OVERCROWDING.

Sixty cases of overcrowding were reported during the year and ten cases were relieved. 147 visits were made to premises in connection with housing applications.

E. INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

Twenty samples of milk were taken from Daw’s Creameries by the County Council and the reports have been satisfactory. The undermentioned food has been sampled by the County Council under the Food and Drugs Act, 1938 :

Choc. Ice	...	...	...	...	...	I
Lime Fruit Cordial	...	...	...	...	...	I
Orange Squash	...	...	...	...	...	I
Butter	...	...	...	...	...	I
Compound Cooking Fat	...	...	...	...	...	I
Ice-Cream Chocolate Flavour	...	...	...	...	...	I
Preserved Ginger	...	...	...	...	...	I

All the above samples were satisfactory.

The slaughter of animals is carried out at the Ministry of Food Slaughter House, at Launceston, and inspections of carcasses are carried out there by Inspectors.

FOOD PREMISES.

One hundred and two visits were made to premises where food is offered or exposed for sale. These premises were satisfactory with regard to cleanliness and hygiene.

The undermentioned food was surrendered and destroyed as unfit for human consumption :

- 19 lbs. Offal.
- 15½ lbs. Butter.
- 16½ lbs. Beef.
- 165¾ lbs. Tinned Food.
- 28 Pairs of Kippers.
- 29 Tins of Milk.

No clean food campaign has been organized.

R. B. HALL,  
(for E. N. Smythe),  
Sanitary Inspector.



